No 1.

#14

Dr. James.

Peritonitis
Enteritis
Diarrhea
Erysipelas
Hematuria
Hysteritis

On Erysipelas

by Hardin Maffee

Died Mar 4th 1817.

A Dissertation on Erysipelas

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Preliminary Remarks

The Skin, which has been denominated the frontice of the human body, considered physiologically, answers a fourfold purpose in the animal oeconomy: It is the organ of touch; it covers and protects the whole structure; it is the outlet for a large proportion of the insensible perspiration, and it performs absorption. So extremely sensible is this part, such are its exposures to the attack of noxious agents, and so invariable are its sympathies with the whole body, and the various component organs, that we shall not be surprised, to find it often the seat of morbid affections. It is not unfrequently, the part first attacked by those noxious agents or causes, which either directly or indirectly, assail the life or health of man. So various are these causes of cutaneous diseases in their mode of operation; so intermingled and obscure are they in the effects which they produce, and such is the near resemblance very often of these effects, that no small degree of difficulty and perplexity is presented, in attempting to distinguish them. Anatomy, which has done so much in explaining many other morbid affections, has not been so successful in elucidating those of the skin; hence, as has been observed, the treatment of them is often empirical and prejudicial. Parts of an identity of structure are generally

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affected by diseases very similar in appearance, but we are not from this circumstance, too hastily to conclude that they are the same: and to none more particularly will this remark apply, than those just mentioned. They are mostly eruptions of various kinds, possessing some characteristics in common, but differing in many others: this is exemplified in small pox, measles &c each seems to possess a peculiar specific action producing effects sui generis. — On what this specific action depends I am unable to say; it is apparently a secretion of a peculiar kind which takes place according to some law of the animal economy, not yet explained. Without, however, our being able to comprehend this subject, by attending carefully to the history of the various phenomena which occur in cutaneous diseases, we shall be enabled to treat them, in many cases successfully. Two circumstances seem constantly to influence them, and ought always to be kept in view viz, the structure of the part affected, and the nature of the noxious agent producing that effect:

Having premised these remarks, I proceed to the consideration of the subject, which is more particularly, the object of this essay.

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Erysipelas.

According to a late writer, this may be defined "An inflammatory, cutaneous, and trivially elevated swelling, attended with redness, which disappears and leaves a white spot for a short time after being touched with the end of the finger; and the affection is characterized by a remarkable propensity, to spread with rapidity to a large extent". Although this disease has been generally considered an inflammatory affection; and it undoubtedly is so, in a very general acceptation of the term inflammation, yet on examining its symptoms more accurately we shall find it very different from phlegmon; the pain, the secretion, the whole of the phenomena are in fact totally dissimilar. In erysipelas genuine pus is never secreted, adhesive inflammation does not circumscribe the disease as in common phlegmon, but matter once extravasated, travels sometimes to a great extent through the cellular substance, causing gangrene and mortification.

As erysipelas never appears in any other part but the skin we have a right to conclude, that this membrane alone is its seat; whether in the rete mucosum, as some have supposed, or the cutis vera, as stated by others, is not absolutely known.

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but gradually spreads from the part it first occupied to the other parts of the face, commonly till it has affected the whole of it; and frequently, from the face it spreads over the hairy scalp, or descends on some part of the neck. As the redneſs spreads, it commonly disappears, or at least decreases in the parts it had before occupied. All the parts on which the redneſs appears are at the same time affected with some swelling, which continues for some time, after the redneſs has gone off. The whole face becomes considerably turgid, and the eyelids are often so much swelled, as entirely to shut up the eyes. When the redneſs and swelling have proceeded for some time, there commonly arise sooner or later, blisters of a larger or smaller size, on several parts of the face. These contain a thin yellowish or almost colourleſs fluid, which is sooner or later discharged by the rupture of the vesicles. The surface of the skin in the blistered places, sometimes becomes livid and blackish: but this livor seldom goes deeper than the surface, or discovers any degree of gangrene affecting the skin. In the parts of the face not affected with blisters, the

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In some cases, the disease has been observed after subsiding on one leg, to affect the other pretty much on the same side, and in some cases it has been supposed to be translated to the brain or other organs. When it affects the testicles, it causes the scrotum to become great deal. In the same manner as occasionally detail, in the extremities.

The swelling of the glands, which is sometimes present, is thought to be a specific effect.

The tongue has shewed albeit the face is not, in clean. It has not so distinct an position as the tongue just mentioned: the swelling has a crenated covering surface, and is of a bluish color, the tongue is pretty and other signs of debility exist. The face resembles a blunder disturbed with rest.

Mr Jonson observes that the form of the disease now under presence of only one a large insect, but there are chiefly shewed by the other constitutions are label dated by age or sports. It is also to prove the most in deformed persons, or children are in new born

Infants. —— The Erythema Impetiginosum of Infants occurs on most commonly, he states, with [illegible] of a bitter taste in the mouth [illegible] with a [illegible] fever, nausea and sometimes vomiting or loss of appetite, the patient being irritable, sleepless, restless, complaining pains, and a sharp sensation of heat, without nausea, having a great dryness of the skin or much thirst. The temperature is usually not frequently insensible. The skin has a rose color becoming copper or yellow; the hair is of a straw or burning brown. It may come with or without fever. This he considers as constituting properly the prodromata of the eruption. The Erysipelas affecting infants at an early period after birth was first described by Dr. Underwood under the name of anomalous inflammation of Infants.

The Zona or shingles has been considered by many writers as a species of erysipelas.

Besides these which are the more regular forms of erysipelas, it frequently occurs in patches on various parts of the body, attended with little or no fever.

If any form of the disease be purely local, it must be this: under this might be included that arising from wounds.

Most authors mention the dangerous state of erysipelas as another species. It seems to be attended by that state of fever which terminates by the vital vessels putrid, or what may now be Typhus Gravior.

The fauces exhibit the usual signs of inflammation and mortification, and frequently sloughs, resembling those we discharge: but the sloughing I conceive, may take place without so malignant a state of fever. The serous effusions of water which often take place in the common acute form of the disease, in the cellular structure, may cause them.

Among the many causes which have been assigned for erysipelas, none seem more distinct or satisfactory. The most ancient opinion is that of Hippocrates and others, who ascribed it depending upon a congestion of the bile.

Modern Authors enumerate the following,

1st Violent Passions. – 2 Exposure to the heat of the

sun, or that of fire too long continued. -- 3. The impression of cold damp air, -- 4. The Action of various vegetable, animal, or mineral poisons. 5th Wounds contusions, fractures &c. 6th Bad food. 7th Suppressed evacuations. — 8th Disorder of the primæ viæ.

There can be no doubt that erysipelas in this country prevailed as an epidemic: Dr. Parr says he has seen it four times; and Mr. Pearson observes that there is some reason to conclude that it is occasionally so. —

Is erysipelas contagious? The best authorities on this subject seem not to decide positively, whether it is, or is not so. It certainly is of some importance to decide this question correctly; without however taking this upon myself, I may be permitted to remark. that it does not follow the laws of those diseases, which are known and acknowledged by every one, to be strictly contagious. They generally destroy the susceptibility to a second attack, whereas it is increased by this.

Will its becoming epidemic render it contagious?

ought it not to produce typhus fever then, and not erysipelas? There can be no doubt of its occurring frequently when there is no probable chance of contagion. What then is the peculiar nature of this disease? Local inflammation of every kind is a very distinct thing from the fever which attends it; and while we admit many distinctions of the former, the same will not hold good of the latter. At the same time we must allow, that the fever is often much influenced by the local disease. —— From all that has been said, we may infer, that the febrile affection may be either inflammatory, typhus, or of a mixed character, that it may, and often does change from one to the other. Fever may be influenced by different circumstances, such as the type of the prevailing epidemic; at one time it is observed by systems that take a dread at this compelled every disease to wear its livery. By the constitution and habits of the person, - those who support life, or rather force it, almost

[illegible] are the [illegible] [illegible], most of [illegible] were [illegible] with [illegible]. The [illegible] ~~[illegible]~~ of the year. the local situation, the [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]. In the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. It [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and by [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

From every view that I have been able to take of the disease, and from the opinions of the most respectable authority, I conclude that it is of a highly inflammatory character, disposed to run, very often, if not checked in a short time into an [illegible] [illegible] and that the greatest mischief happens from an [illegible] of action.

With regard to the treatment of [illegible] [illegible] with [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] amongst [illegible] in some the cases of [illegible], [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] on [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] with [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] means. The [illegible] [illegible] of the present time, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the best

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The curative means are generally divided into the general or constitutional, and the local.

As the most powerful means of reducing arterial action, and thereby moderating, or overcoming the violence of the disease, bloodletting may be placed first. Employed indiscriminately, as Celsus and some others have recommended, it could not fail, in many cases, not only to be useless, but highly pernicious; but [illegible] early stage of the disease, it is an [illegible] remedy. In [illegible] we might enumerate many of the most [illegible] practitioners among whom we may mention [illegible] and [illegible] names [illegible].

In favour of [illegible], there is not so much unanimity, we have however amongst [illegible], the [illegible] who is justly considered one of the most experienced and judicious practitioners. It has been remarked by Dr. [illegible] [illegible] by vomitings and [illegible] [illegible], from which we may conclude [illegible]

in such cases, emetics would have been [illegible] instead evacuating the stomach [illegible] a [illegible] application, through its sympathy on the [illegible] action, and [illegible] on the skin: in most cases [illegible] and [illegible] there is [illegible] from [illegible].

Purgatives have been highly extolled by some, others have been as much opposed by others, yet in many cases they have been [illegible] recommended. It is allowed by every one to be proper in all cases to keep the bowels in a laxative state; and in the phlegmonous erysipelas, of the face and head, where [illegible] may be given, not to be neglected; but as purging interferes with another important indication, the determination to the surface, it in many cases becomes a questionable remedy.

Drastic purgatives have been recommended, but the common practice at the present time, are the antiphlogistic. Depletion practice was to give an ounce of the [illegible] salts, largely diluted, and this to be repeated if [illegible].

In every case, the body must be kept at a moderate temperature, such as will be most agreeable to the patients feelings In the Oedematous and gangrenous erysipelas, we evacuate less and resort earlier to stimulants.
The local means have been, even more numerous than the general; various ointments, cataplasms, washes be have been recommended, but have all been found inefficacious or prejudicial. So fully was Dr Cullen persuaded of this, that he discards them all, except a little flour sprinkled on the part, in order to absorb the fluid discharged from the vesicles. Since his time however, a very important improvement has taken place in the treatment of this disease. I allude to the use of blisters, and a solution of opium. Blisters were used so long ago as the time of Ambrose Paré; they were then directed to be applied to the neighbouring parts. A very different practice is now followed; we apply them directly to the diseased part They excite a new action in the part, and according to that law of the animal oeconomy, so ably developed by Mr Hunter, the incompatability of two actions of

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equal force in the same part, at the same time. overcome the disease, and allow the part to assume its healthy action. To Dr Physick are we indebted for the introduction of this excellent practice, in the treatment of erysipelas. cases which formerly spread with dreadful devastation, can now be checked with as much promptness, and certainty, as any other disease.
As it would not be so proper to apply blisters to the face, it is in this case that we resort to the solution of opium, with great advantage.
In the erysipelas which so often attends wounds and bruises, blisters are eminently serviceable; they should be applied all over the diseased part.
When collections of matter form, free incisions should be made, and not small openings as some have advised, inorder to evacuate the matter, with the sloughs